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From the Kriegsacademie to the Naval War College: The Military Planning Process

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For centuries military planning was thought to be the exclusive right of noblemen and the highest achievement of genius and charismatic leadership. Prussia's defeat by France in 1806 led to a new view of military planning that was to prove revolutionary. To this end, the first war college was established in Berlin, and the once mysterious art of war began to be systemized and demonstrated to young officer students. The Prussian general staff became a model for the world and with it their system of planning. Since that time the military planning process has undergone continual refinement, much of it here at the Naval War College.

FROM THE KRIEGSACADEMIE TO THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE: THE MILITARY PLANNING PROCESS

A lecture delivered at the Naval War College

by

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To begin our discussion of the Military Planning Process at the Naval War College, we will have to cross the Atlantic and cast our minds back to the early 18th century and the personage of Frederick the Great, who was born in 1712 and reigned as the King of Prussia from 1740 to 1786. The compliments of genius and greatness have been bestowed upon Frederick by many historians and most of his biographers. His brilliance as a military tactician was most conspicuous in the innovations he brought to military organization and planning. He lightened and increased the mobility of his cavalry and artillery; and, since "God is always with the strongest battalions and battles are won by superiority of fire," he greatly increased the firepower of his deployed forces. Frederick's insights and innovations in military planning and tactics, now very obvious to us, marked in his time a new era in combat. His brilliance, coupled with boldness, led Napoleon to say of him, "He was above all great in the most critical moments."

Frederick's greatness as a tactician and field general was eclipsed in time by the feats of Napoleon, but for our purposes the point is not the greatness of Frederick nor of Napoleon, but rather the attitude and behavior of the military organizations they left behind. In 1747 Frederick wrote a manual for his officers, revised a year later under the title of *The Principles of War.* This remarkable work, written when the Prince was but 35 years old, put forth in great detail his concepts of maneuvers. It was a closely guarded document, such that each of the 50 copies was held accountable. As one would expect, some hapless officer had the misfortune of getting captured with the book. It was immediately recognized for its importance and promptly translated and widely distributed throughout Europe. This and other writings left behind by Frederick, who died in 1786, had the

fate of being elevated to near scripture by the Prussian military staff. Indeed, the process toward rigid formalism had already begun while Frederick was still alive. And, not only in the Prussian staff, but in all of the military staffs of Europe. As one contemporary historian noted:

> It has been one of the misfortunes of armies that Frederick's great reputation led to slavish imitation of the forms of the Prussian military system. Young officers from England and France attended the reviews at Potsdam and thought all the secrets of Frederick's success lay in Prussian drill, Prussian uniforms, and the shine and polish tradition. They were unable to distinguish the symbol from the substance in the Prussian army. Drill was mistaken for the art of war although Frederick never so interpreted it. He "laughed in his sleeve," says Napoleon, "at the parades of Potsdam, when he perceived young officers, French, English, and Austrian, so infatuated with the maneuver of the oblique order, which was fit for nothing except to gain a few adjutant-majors a reputation."

This blind adulation of Frederick's ideas continued apace for nearly a century after his death. In like manner the writings and memory of Napoleon were cherished by the French general staff. The results for Prussia and France were the same, namely a fall from greatness through humiliating military defeats after their leaders were dead. Prussia's refusal to change its tactics in the Napoleonic Empire Wars led to crushing defeats against inferior forces at Jena and Auerstädt in 1806. These defeats led the following year to the Treaty of Tilsit whereby Prussia lost all her territory east of the Elbe. The humiliation of this treaty brought forth a determination on the part of the Prussians to seek out and identify what had gone wrong in recent campaigns. Though an increasing percentage of the Prussian troops were enlisted from foreign countries, there was no apparent decay in the discipline of the Prussian Army. But something was amiss and had to be put aright if greatness was ever again to be achieved.

An inquiry was conducted, and the findings marked the end of the Frederick the Great era and the beginning for Prussia of a new philosophy of military planning. The Prussian staff reached the following conclusions:

1. That it was the genius of Frederick the Great that made the Prussian war machine invincible and not the organizational structure that developed around him and survived him.

2. That such genius obviously was not available on beck and call.

3. That some new methods were necessary and therefore must be generated to insure future leadership.

4. That Napoleon's system appeared to possess the same inherent weakness as theirs, namely, dependence on genius for leadership.

It appears that the staff concluded that it was safer and wiser to develop a high average of ability and leadership through training than to trust untrained commonsense or to rely upon the appearance of genius at the time of war.

The profound inference was that the art of military command could actually be taught. That was a rejection of the 18th century view that war could be carried on effectively by amateurs and that military planning and tactics were the sole provinces of charismatic leaders.

In 1810 the Prussian general staff established in Berlin, under the command of Gen. Gerhart von Sharnhorst, the *Kriegsacademie* (War Academy), for the purpose of "training officers for high command and general staff work."

The period of study at the academy was a full 3 years! The curriculum included lectures and discussions on tactics, fortifications, administration, geography, and military law. The academy stood for the belief that men of ordinary intelligence, if properly trained and organized, could carry out any of the tasks of high command.

The success of General von Sharnhorst and those that followed him, chief among them General von Moltke, went largely unnoticed throughout Europe for nearly 60 years until the Prussians gained startling victories over Austria in 1866 and France in 1870. In both of these campaigns the efficiency and training of the Prussian officer corps and the general staff were demonstrated with such clarity that historians cite the events as the time in history when Germany replaced France as the model for all military men in Western civilization.

In 1905 Col. G.F.R. Henderson, a widely read British author of his time, commented on the impact these events had on the role of education and the teaching of the science of war:

> In all ages the power of intellect has asserted itself in War. It was not courage and experience only that make Hannibal, Alexander, and Caesar the greatest names of antiquity. Napoleon, Wellington, and the Archduke Charles were certainly the most educated soldiers of their time; while Lee, Jackson, and Sherman probably knew more of war before they made it than anyone else in the United States . . .. But it was not until 1866 and 1870 that the preponderating influence of the trained mind was made manifest. *Other wars had shown the value of an educated general, these showed the value of an educated army* . . .. The great host of Austria was shattered to fragments in seven weeks; the French Imperial Army was destroyed in seven weeks and three days. [Italics added]

Greeks, Rumanians, and Turks hiked to Berlin to study at the *Kriegsacademie*. Later in that same decade, war colleges were started in Great Britain and France. The Royal Military Staff School was established in 1873, and the *Ecole Militaire Superior* was set up in 1878.

Our own Naval War College was started under the leadership of Commodore Stephen B. Luce in 1884. It, too, was based on the Prussian model and the same notion that war was a legitimate area of study and that it could be taught and learned. Here, as in Europe, there was still debate over this idea. In the late 1800's it was widely held that generalship was the product of genius and intuition. In our own Navy, statements such as "Farragut never attended a war school" persisted. It is significant to note, however, that in the early years, when the college was still struggling for recognition and acceptance, there were no critics of the college among those officers who had attended the course. Those who criticized the college had not attended it!

Besides the Prussian notion that war could be taught and learned, Admiral Luce also held what we might call a scientistic view of history. He was confident that a systematic study of history would yield general theories of strategy. This point of view was not held by all, any more than was Prussian military thought, but it was shared by Admiral Luce and Captain Mahan. In a most valuable unpublished doctoral dissertation, entitled "Professors of War, The Naval War College and the Modern American Navy," Ronald Spector states: "Just as the 18th century philosophers had gone up and down the field of history looking for man in general so Mahan was later to go up and

down the field of naval history looking for unchanging principles of strategy."

The assumptions of the professional officer, at the turn of the century, not only differed within the military community but, as a group, were considerably different than those held by his fellow citizens. For the professional officer, war was inevitable and necessary for national survival; to the civilian, war was probably avoidable and in all cases undesirable. Moreover, if a war had to be fought, it could best be waged by a body of citizen soldiers and sailors springing romantically to arms at the last moment of danger. It was the talented and improvising amateur that best fit the American image of the military leader.

Spector adds:

> In fact the War College was fundamentally an un-American institution. Not simply in the sense that it derived its inspiration from foreign examples but in its whole concept. In every way it was opposed to traditional American ideas. It stood for the theoretical in a society which valued the practical. In an age of increasing specialization it stood for the ideal of the generalist. In a country which viewed wars as an aberration and foreign policy as a nuisance, it insisted that the two were inseparable and that they were as much the business of government as tariffs, and civil reform. It is not surprising then that Luce's hybrid European plant did not flourish in American soil. What is surprising is that it grew at all.

Added to all these difficulties was the discovery that little had been written at that time on the subject of naval tactics and strategy. One officer, after surveying the field in 1884, concluded that even the latest and best public writing on the subject was "more or less unsatisfactory." Spector comments that, in effect, the War College was established to teach a subject that did not even exist.

One area of military study did exist, however, and already enjoyed a well-developed body of literature in Europe. This was, of course, the Prussian general staff approach to military planning. At the turn of the century the subject was referred to as the "System" or as the "Estimate of the Situation." It was the beginning of what we call today the Military Planning Process.

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Having seen the concept of systemized planning germinate in Europe and that the art of war could be taught and learned, we might continue our investigation by tracing how the Estimate of the Situation was brought to Newport. There is no evidence to indicate that Admiral Luce had direct contact with members of the Prussian staff or the *Kriegsacademie*. However, we do know that Luce had made the acquaintance of Gen. Emory Upton, an Army officer of great brilliance and influence.

It was Upton who was largely responsible for bringing the German techniques of military education to the United States. He languished in the post-Civil War period and in 1876 persuaded General Sherman and the then Secretary of War Belknap to send him on an extensive tour abroad to study military institutions and techniques. He was instructed by Belknap to "pay particular attention to the German schools for the instruction of officers in strategy, good tactics and applied tactics." Upton returned home to write a book of his observations entitled *The Armies of Asia and Europe* published in 1878.

Luce met Upton the same year at the Army Artillery School which Upton headed at Fort Monroe, Va. It was here,

according to Spector, that Upton encouraged Luce to establish a college for the Navy. Admiral Luce concurred in the need for such a school but saw its potential role, not in the Upton image of a training school for staff and command techniques, but rather as a center for strategic studies and original research. The development of the War College during its early years and the arguments over its worth, purpose, and contributions is a fascinating tale, but for the task at hand we best leave Admiral Luce and move ahead to the second decade of the 20th century.

In 1912 the first article of the Estimate of the Situation was published in the September issue of the *United States Naval Institute Proceedings,* under the authorship of the "members of the staff of the United States Naval War College." This article, bearing the laborious title of "Notes on the Applicatory System of Solving War Problems with Examples Showing the Adaptation of the System to Naval Problems," marks the official beginning of the Military Planning Process in the curriculum of the Naval War College. It appears from the rough drafts, still available in the War College archives, that the article was actually written by Commander Vogelgesang, with generous assistance of McCarty Little.

Briefly, the applicatory system was described as consisting of three parts. First, the Estimate of the Situation; secondly, the Writing of Orders; and finally, the Evaluation of the Plan, either through a "map maneuver" or in the field.

Notwithstanding the rather stilted literary style of military authors in the early 1900's, today's reader of the 1912 article of the applicatory system cannot help but be struck by the formalized and elevated manner in which the "system" was discussed.

> It stands alone without a rival, and has so stood, for a hundred years . . .. It has been consecrated by success in its application to the conditions of war; and it behooves any who would seek to gain efficiency in the art to follow in the wake of its most successful teachers.

Why such reverent references to the system? Why, at this early date, at least in the United States and most certainly at Newport, had this young discipline already taken on the trappings of holy writ? The answer lies, I believe, in the theoretical foundations of the system: a number of revolutionary ideas, the acceptance of which in Berlin, Europe, Fort Leavenworth, and finally in Newport, took great foresight, courage, and no small amount of risk on the part of those officers who were now putting before their students and their service this system of military planning.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that the adoption of the applicatory system marked a swing toward a more technical orientation of the curriculum of the college, in contrast to the strategic orientation founded by Luce and Mahan. Admiral Knight commented in his 1916 history of the Naval War College that " . . . the 'strategic level' educational mission envisioned by Admiral Luce gradually began to succumb to 'basic professional training.'" Indeed, in Spector's view the introduction of the applicatory system was the beginning of the end of the War College as a center for original research.

The propositions that had to be accepted before the stage could be set for the presentation of the military planning process and its acceptance as part of the curriculum here and elsewhere were as follows: First, as we have already seen, was the notion that war and its planning could be taught and learned. Secondly, that subordinate officers should be given responsibility; they should be trained to obey orders, not as automatons, but rather as reasoning

men capable of and expected to further the intentions of their superiors. And finally, that a body of theory and its applications, basic to the understanding of war, its planning and execution, could be developed into what is today called doctrine. Indeed, the very concept of doctrine had to be invented to make the system work!

We have already examined in sufficient detail the development of the notion that war and military planning could be taught and learned. We have also seen how the acceptance of this idea led in part to the establishment of war colleges both here and in Europe. This leads, then, to the second idea, namely, that subordinate officers should be given responsibility and be expected to think. We view this idea today as a self-evident truth. Yet, for many officers at the turn of the century it was viewed as complete heresy and the beginning of the end of military order, discipline, and the profession of arms. For many 19th century officers the single concept of command was simply, "I command—you obey." To them, a thinking subordinate left to his own devices was downright dangerous and a hazard to discipline and authority. Further, as Henderson observed, "It was no part of their duty, they declared, to train the judgement of their subordinates; they were soldiers, and not pedagogues."

Nonetheless, as the 19th century drew to a close, the Prussians and others began to reflect, not only on the recent wars of Europe, but on the Civil War in America as well. Clearly, modern warfare with its large conscripted armies moving with increased mobility and firepower required new command and control structures.

The Prussians set out to meet these requirements by developing a new and sound system of military organization. At the outset some practical observations influenced the early designers. The new system had to recognize that an army cannot be efficiently controlled by direct orders from headquarters. The on-scene commander is often the best judge of the situation, and his intelligent cooperation is of infinitely more value than his mechanical obedience. Henderson states that it was proposed, therefore:

> . . . that no order was to be blindly obeyed unless the superior who issued it was actually present, and therefore cognizant of the situation at the time that it was received. If this was not the case, the recipient was to use his own judgement, and act as he believed his superior would have directed him to do had he been aware of how matters stood . . . . It was long before the system was accepted, even in Germany itself.

Obviously, if subordinates were to be given such responsibility, measures had to be taken to insure that their actions were structured to reflect with precision the objectives of their superiors. It was remarked that Napoleon, in criticism of his marshals, frequently made use of the statement that so and so failed "because he did not understand my system." By 1870 there were very few Prussian officers, if any, on the general staff or elsewhere in the field that ran this risk. Nearly all were thoroughly conversant with the theories and procedures taught at the academy and practiced by the staff.

As these notions developed, a body of knowledge began to emerge which supported the establishment of the system. Expectations were defined, and procedures were formalized into what we call doctrine today. In addition, junior officers were discouraged from "displaying rashness or selfish enterprise." The difference between orders and instructions was clearly defined, and finally, officers were trained to arrive at correct decisions—thus the

beginning of the Estimate of the Situation.

We begin to see then that the Estimate of the Situation, though a new development, was not nearly so remarkable for its time as the environment for which it was designed. This was a new and exciting era for military officers, but one in need of safeguards and structured command and control procedures. The Estimate of the Situation provided the guidance so necessary to control the new freedom of subordinates that was now deemed essential for modern warfare.

Our own military planning process and the published guidelines that abound in the form of NWP's and NWIP's share a rationale founded in these earlier times. It is not difficult to see the historical relationship between a current "Concept Annex" in an operation order and the letter of instructions that was delivered to a Prussian commander in the field. We can also better understand how initiative through knowledge, instead of traditional blind and inert obedience, led to the present requirement in all modern military directives for the commander to state his mission, not only in terms of tasks to be accomplished, but in terms of purpose as well.

Over time, we have come to accept the command devices at our disposal without realizing that they were not always so designed. Without some understanding of the origins of these devices and their evolution, we run the risk ourselves of adhering blindly to present doctrine in the manner of the early Prussians.

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Many planning related activities at the Naval War College influenced the first lecture on the Estimate of the Situation. The need for well-conceived war plans was profoundly recognized by members of the college staff from the earliest days of Luce and Mahan. Evidence of careful and detailed historical research on the effects of good planning—or the lack of it—is impressively reflected in a memorandum drafted in one day, 24 February 1904, by members of the staff in response to an urgent telegram from the Bureau of Navigation. President Theodore Roosevelt, through the Secretary of the Navy, desired "... historical facts and arguments showing wherein war operations carefully prepared during peace by a well organized general staff show decided superiority over those conducted by a badly organized or no staff."

Eleven campaigns were analyzed in the 31-page typed report. Capt. C.S. Sperry, the President of the college, summarized for the President that: "The failures noted are much more numerous than the successes, but it is not difficult to trace many of the failures to lack of well digested plans and the successes are notable instances of careful, intelligent, and leisurely planning in advance."

As we would expect, the report cites the Prussian campaigns against Austria and France as the "first class of illustration."

> The German General Staff under the chieftainship of von Moltke, had made the most elaborate provisions for this, as doubtless for other wars. There was nothing to do when war came except to telegraph the order to mobilize. That order received, every officer, even in the remotest part of the Kingdom of Prussia, knew precisely his duties ... and in an incredibly short space of time the German troops were pouring toward the frontier. Then another port-folio was opened and the strategical plans appeared ....

The Russo-Japanese War, then still in progress, was also cited as an example of

good planning on the part of the Japanese. The classified report continued:

> We know that Japan has a General Staff and that it is physically impossible for such a plan [the successful attack against the Russian Fleet at Port Arthur and the subsequent amphibious invasion of Korea] to have matured in all its details of mobilization and transport within a few weeks prior to the outbreak of hostilities by advisors collected on the instant, and executed faultlessly on clock time.

With refreshing candor, President Roosevelt was invited to compare Japan's performance with "the hasty purchase and makeshift outfit of all classes of vessels at the outbreak of our Spanish War of 1898, and the embarkation at Tampa."

Commenting on the Revolutionary War and the English War Ministry's lack of organization and planning, the authors of the report cited as sufficient comment the contemporary observations of our old acquaintance, Frederick the Great: "When I reflect on the conduct of that government in the war with their colonies, I am also tempted to say what the theologians maintain with regard to Providence, that their ways are not ours."

Of our own Civil War, the staff had these observations for the President:

> The war of secession 1861-65 is probably the most conspicuous example in history, certainly in recent history, of the results that flow from the lack of everything that a General Staff implies. There was no organization for the making of plans, and no plans except such as were made by one General or Admiral, superseded by those of another, these to be changed in turn by superior authority. The result was confusion, delay, loss, marching to and fro, and four years of war. Perhaps it was necessary that a great war involving the abolition of slavery should have been fought to a finish, but from a military point of view it cannot be doubted that in 1861 a small but well equipped and disciplined army could have gone anywhere North or South, and have overcome any force of volunteers hastily and imperfectly assembled to oppose it.

These historical analyses, in the tradition of Mahan, were not the only aspects of war planning entertained at the Naval War College. Members of the staff drafted actual war plans as early as 1895. In 1907 the first of a series of "War Portfolios" was prepared by the college staff in conjunction with the General Board in Washington. At this time the War College was the only agency in the Navy capable of doing general staff work! By 1911 planning requirements had become so demanding that the President of the college, Rear Adm. Raymond Rogers, advised Washington that further production of war plans for the General Board could no longer be done without prejudice to the college's role as an educational institution. Planning commitments were in time relaxed; however, the War College continued to assist the General Board until the Chief of Naval Operations assumed the role of chief war planner in 1915.

There were other factors that influenced the form and substance of the applicatory system and Comdr. Frank Marble's first lecture. In 1893, under the presidency of Comdr. Henry C. Taylor, the college staff sought to find a "comprehensive system" which would better suit the current organizational needs of the Navy. Many forms of organizations were examined, including

commercial companies, the British Board of the Admiralty, and the general staff of the German Army. Ten years later, commenting on the findings and decision, Admiral Taylor stated: "... the German methods, nearer than any other, are what are needed for us, after they have been modified to suit the different political conditions existing in this country."

Much the same conclusions were reached at the Army War College at Fort Leavenworth, where the task of modifying the German system to suit American needs was already well underway. Two pamphlets were published there that influenced the format and substance of the early lectures and publications here in Newport. The first of these was entitled *Field Orders, Messages and Reports,* written in 1906 by Maj. Eban Swift. The second, and most important, was written in 1909 by Capt. Roger S. Fitch and was entitled *Estimating Tactical Situations and Composing Orders.* Captain Fitch's work was cited and widely quoted by the Newport staff.

Fitch's form for the Estimate of the Situation consisted of the following outline:

I Mission
II The Enemy—strength, position and intentions
III Our Own Troops
IV Terrain
V Time and Space
VI Methods—advantages and disadvantages
VII Decision—"The capstone of the structure"

Fitch defined the mission as "The general purpose of the supreme command and the means through which it can be furthered."

> As the Commander's true mission should be the guiding star of all his ordered movements, it is plain that he, especially if acting independently, cannot be too careful in interpreting his orders aright and in acting in such a way as will best further the interests of his superior commanders.

Fitch cautioned his readers that the so-called "fog of war" would obscure the commander's view of enemy intentions and that therefore "the commander should make his mission and not the movement of the enemy the governing factor in planning." This good counsel was lost by all for 33 years, as we shall see later.

And so, with Admiral Taylor's decision that the German system of planning was best and armed with the Fitch outline, Commander Marble prepared and delivered the first lecture on the Estimate of the Situation to the class of 26 officer-students then attending the summer session of 1910. He introduced his subject, confident that "no amount of education and training would assure success to some, but no one can deny a careful and assiduous training is vastly beneficial even to the stupid." The lecture opened with a brief demonstration of the need for systematic study of tactical problems. Marble acknowledged that the form adopted for the estimate was "virtually the same as that adopted by the Army, somewhat condensed and modified to suit naval needs." The form for the Navy's first Estimate of the Situation consisted of four headings:

I Mission
II Position and Strength of the Enemy
III Position and Strength of Own Forces
IV Decision

Marble's form remained essentially unchanged from 1910 to 1921. The separate emphasis that Fitch gave to time and space factors, terrain considerations, and methods of

accomplishing the mission were not to appear in the Naval War College outlines for many years.

The first planning problem presented to the students in 1910 is interesting historically, and since Marble presented it concisely we can afford to quote it here:

> *Situation:* A Blue force of 15 battleships and 6 armored cruisers is steaming northeast at 12 knots to intercept a Red force of 12 battleships and 9 armored cruisers reported coming from the eastward. The Blue Admiral expects to sight the enemy's smoke in the morning. He has signalled his captains to repair on board in order to explain to them his intended plan of action. The weather is warm and clear, with smooth sea and moderate breeze from the NW. The maximum speed of the Blue battleships and cruisers may be taken at 16 and 20 knots respectively and that of the Red ships at 14 and 19.
>
> *Desired:* 1. The plan of action, and the manner and formation of approach.
>
> 2. The Blue Admiral's Estimate of the Situation showing the reasons which have led to the line of action determined upon.

Marble concluded his lecture with a detailed discussion of the writing of orders and the various forms that orders could be put into. He followed as a reference in these matters the work of Maj. Eban Swift.

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Over the years the Estimate of the Situation has evolved from Commander Marble's brief discussion to our present college text *Naval Planning* which is but a detailed commentary on the doctrinal publication, NWP 11A—*Naval Operational Planning.* Any discussion, however brief, of the various pamphlets that have been written on the subject over the years would be a lengthy and dry task, since, on the average, a new version of the estimate or its sometimes separate companion "Formulation of Orders" appeared on campus every 2 years since 1910. Changes in most revisions were usually minor with an occasional major edition appearing about every 10 years up to about 1950.

The first of these major editions appeared in 1915 under the direct authorship of Rear Adm. Austin M. Knight, then President of the college. Published by the *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* under the title "The Estimate of the Situation" and reproduced for distribution to the students, the treatise followed in outline the original form for the estimate as set down by Commander Marble in 1919. Admiral Knight was the first author at the War College to lay great stress on the necessity for a logical exposition of the problem and the need for sound reasoning. *"The Estimate is not for the purpose of justifying a decision previously arrived at. It is a reasoned solution of a problem where each step in the process approaches a decision which, without those steps, could be arrived at by accident only."* [Knight's italics]

In 1924 the form for the estimate was considerably expanded and, in the main, confused. For example, a detailed series of questions had to be answered by the commander incident to identifying his mission. In effect, this amounted to an estimate within the Estimate of the Situation. Further confusion was added in a detailed discussion on "minor decisions," seen then as missions rather than tasks. One curious oversight in earlier works, in light of the numerous German references to "purpose" as well as "task," was at least corrected in this edition. This was the

need to state the "why" as well as the "what and how" in the decision statement.

The simple logic underlying the form of the estimate was nearly lost sight of in the 1926 revision. In addition to the small estimate required for the mission in 1924, two more estimates appeared in the 1926 outline; one for enemy force considerations and the other for own forces. Compounding the confusion was the notion that the "decision" dealt with the first problem at hand only. Thus the accomplishment of one immediate mission called for the assignment of a new mission and therefore a new estimate. In effect, the estimate became a recurring process for the commander as he went from one immediate crisis to the next, hopefully in the end accomplishing the "ultimate mission of the superior." This confusion was the result of a lack of precision in defining the concept of mission. The discussion suffered from a lack of vocabulary which has since developed, namely, the distinction between the mission and its associated objectives, requirements, and tasks.

The problem began to get sorted out in 1929. In this revision, written while Rear Admiral Pringle was President of the War College, the commander's mission was defined in terms of task and purpose. The concept of "objectives" was introduced, wherein the various enemy forces which had to be encountered were identified. Finally, after "the decision" was made, the commander was to identify what "operations" would be required to carry it out. This, in turn, was the basis for making "auxiliary decisions" which included the "formulation of tasks."

In 1933 Capt. Forde A. Todd, the head of the Senior Class Strategy, wrote an excellent volume entitled *The Study and Discussion of the Estimate of the Situation.* It is noteworthy in that it carries a brief resumé of the estimate as it evolved both here and in Europe; a brief discussion of student difficulties was also included. To show the flexibility of the estimate and the order forms, Capt. R.B. Coffey transposed General Grant's letter of instructions to General Meade into the then current standard operation plan format. This done, Admiral Nelson's memorandum before Trafalgar was transposed into the battle plan format. This exercise came off rather well and must have been good sport. The entire work was admirable in that it was the first pamphlet written about the estimate from the point of view of commenting on established doctrinal procedures; nothing quite like it appears again until after 1950.

Sound Military Decision, 1942, was written under the supervision of Rear Adm. E.C. Kalbfus. This loose-bound volume in a green cover was the most lengthy and literate treatment of the subject ever written at the college. Referred to by the students as the "Green Hornet," the text discussed at a leisurely pace, not only the estimate, but the art and science of war, the necessity for logical thought, and the exercise of professional judgment. It was widely used throughout World War II. In 1944 Fleet Admiral King, as Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, and the Chief of Naval Operations, issued to his staff a brief excerpt of the volume under the title "Cominch P-1, Naval Directives and the Order Form."

Many terms and concepts, basic to present-day doctrine, were introduced in *Sound Military Decision* or the smaller pamphlets in the years immediately preceding it. The role of assumptions and the need for alternative plans were recognized in 1938. The testing of courses of action by suitability and feasibility criteria appeared in 1940, and the additional test for acceptability was added to this edition. In addition, the last major change to the estimate appeared in this edition.

Up until 1942 Commanders were enjoined to consider enemy actions in

the same light as their own; that is, the enemy's mission and objectives were to be deduced, if at all possible, and his probable intentions were to be determined and planned against. (In fact, up until the Knight edition in 1915, courses of action were actually considered as answers to the enemy intentions.) This concept began to weaken in 1936.

> The definite formulation of the Enemy Mission, however, is not always possible with sufficient accuracy to be of benefit. Moreover, it appears that if a choice of Missions is open to the enemy, the Commander may fall into error by choosing one to the exclusion of the others. He may, therefore, find it useful to set forth several Missions, any one of which the enemy might reasonably be expected to adopt.

By 1942 the impracticability and the danger of dealing in enemy intentions were fully recognized, and the term "enemy capabilities" came into use. "The Commander is not exclusively interested in what the enemy may intend to do, or even in what the enemy may be known at the time, to intend to do; such intentions are subject to change, and do not therefore, cover the whole field of capabilities."

The experiences of large naval staffs during World War II pointed up the need for comprehensive service-wide planning documents. After the war, efforts of the college staff were directed toward this end. In a memorandum for the staff, dated 12 March 1946, Admiral Spruance, then President of the college was quoted by his chief of staff as stating:

> The Estimate of the Situation should be simplified and reduced and a standard publication should be issued which is not to be changed by a shift in command of the Naval War College or by the new ideas of individuals every one or two years. In other words, a fixed meaning will grow up from midshipman to flag officer as to certain features of the Estimate of the Situation.

Under Admiral Spruance's supervision, the current War College texts on the estimate were compared with a joint text prepared by the War Department and the texts used by the other services. The comparison was favorable, and no major changes in the basic sequence of the estimate as taught at the college were deemed necessary.

The military planning process had come of age. And so, at the behest of Admiral Denfeld, then Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Spruance submitted to Washington a rough draft of what was to become, the following year, our first doctrinal treatise on the subject—*The Naval Manual of Operational Planning.* After a number of revisions, this manual was superseded in 1953 by NWP 11—*Naval Operational Planning.*

Since that time the War College has continued to issue to its students detailed commentaries on the subject. Our most recent text is *Naval Planning 1966.* In turn, these commentaries and the discussions they stimulate among the students, both resident and correspondent, influence not only the curriculum at the War College, but the basic doctrine as well.

The Military Planning Process has evolved into an agreed sequence of formal, logical steps as outlined in the planning guides promulgated by the various services. In actual practice however, particularly under the stress of crisis, these formal steps are frequently telescoped. Indeed, this is the rule rather than the exception. Mental Estimates of the Situation and compressed Developments of the Plan can be made with confidence by the experienced

military planner as long as the basic elements of the Military Planning Process are not slighted. For the student planner, not yet formally introduced to the process, such abbreviations, born out of impatience, not crisis, invariably lead to numerous errors, lost motion, and uncontrolled leaps of illogic.

To avoid these errors the student must be made to appreciate the need for the Military Planning Process. The frailty of man, the reasoning animal, can be demonstrated to the point of near despair, as in Captain Sperry's memorandum to President Roosevelt. On the other hand, the process should not be advertised as an infallible problem-solving system—which it is not—but rather as a logical way to conduct a thorough analysis. If, as a result, all still goes wrong, the commander will have at least made reasoned errors.

Of late, the greatest strain on military planners has been the Supervision of the Planned Action. How is the achievement of objectives measured? How are objectives altered by the course of events? When are such alterations unacceptable to a course of action being executed? At what point in the unfolding action can the commander consider his mission accomplished? These problems are not new, just more complex and vital. Without recourse to a thorough Estimate of the Situation, the foundations for value judging these problems are lacking, and reason gives way to bias and emotions. Further, within the estimate and at the very outset, special emphasis must be given to understanding the assigned mission and its military and nonmilitary implications. If these essential matters are not fully appreciated and always kept in mind, the "fog of war" will be left undispelled, and the commander's forces will be committed to seeking solutions to a problem not understood. Sixty years have not diminished the cogency of Captain Fitch's advice: "The Commander's true mission should be the guiding star of all his ordered movements."

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Lt. Comdr. Charles W. Cullen, U.S. Navy, holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Saint John's University, Minnesota, and a master's degree in international relations from The American University. Operational duty has included tours in the U.S.S. *Frank E. Evans* (DD 754), U.S.S. *William V. Pratt* (DLG 13), and command of the U.S.S. *Outagamie County* (LST 1073). A graduate of the School of Naval Command and Staff (Class of 1968), Lieutenant Commander Cullen is currently assigned to the faculty of the Naval War College where he is serving as the Assistant for Military Planning and Naval Operations in the Correspondence School.

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Biographic Correction: Mr. Howard R. Simpson, author of "Offshore Guerrilla Warfare" in our October issue, is currently serving as Press Adviser to the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, State Department, and not with the Defense Intelligence Agency as was stated in his biographic summary.